

South Street Seaport Museum,
205 Front Street (Lawrence Building)
New York
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5676

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
205 FRONT STREET
(Lawrence Building)

HABS No. NY-5676

Location: 205 Front Street,
Between Fulton Street and Beekman Street,
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: New York City.
Lessee: South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Occupant: Maritime Library Warehouse.

Present Use: Office, library, storage.

Significance: Built by 1800, 205 Front Street is one of the oldest buildings in the Seaport. Originally occupied by shipping merchants Jenkins and Havers, the much altered brick building sheltered many different kinds of businesses including a grocery, a lottery office and an oil factory. Today 205 Front Street is part of the South Street Seaport Museum, a group of stores, galleries and piers standing in close proximity to high-rise office buildings in Lower Manhattan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Although water lots were granted on this block in 1750, the Common Council of New York City did not agree to "regulate" (or grade) Front Street from Burling Slip to Peck Slip until 1797.

Occupied by Jenkins and Havers, shipping merchants by 1800 and owned by the Lawrences, 205 Front Street was assessed at \$5000 to the occupants; the relatively high assessment value indicates a substantial building. Until the renumbering of Front Street in 1829, the building was known as 200 Front Street.

2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Water lot #5 was granted to John Cannon in 1750. When filled, the land was designated Block 96W, Lot 8. Information for the following chain of title comes from New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogates Court.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
Recorded June 4, 1813 Indenture made May 31, 1763	Liber 168; p. 151 Lawrence and Hannah Kortingler	John and LeGrande Cannon
Before 1776	Liber, page unknown and unavailable John and LeGrande Cannon	Jeremiah Brower
	Liber; page unknown and unavailable. Theophilus Brower and Henry Roone (Exrs. of the Estate of Jeremiah Brower)	At some time Brower's water lots 5 and 6 were conveyed to the Lawrences
March 16, 1812	Liber 99; p. 31 John and Patience Lawrence Isaac and Cornelia B. Lawrence	Epenetus Smith (\$6000)
March 11, 1848	Liber 502; p. 352 John J.V. Westervelt (Sheriff) Edhenetres Smith	Abraham Leggett
March 10, 1882	Liber 1648; p. 101 Francis H. Leggett (Trustee, will of Abraham Leggett)	William P. Howell
November 24, 1896	Liber 39; p. 165 William P. Howell Co.	Cornelius Costello
February 25, 1898	Liber 45; p. 229 Cornelius Costello	William P. Howell Co.
September 9, 1899	Liber 56; p. 229 William P. Howell Co.	Rosalie DeN. Moran
September 18, 1899	Liber 54; p. 318 William P. Howell	Rosalie DeN. Moran
March 31, 1905	Liber 92; p. 90 Rosalie DeN. Moran	John H. Applegate
February 3, 1912	Liber 137; p. 199 John H. Applegate and Mary Applegate	Arthur P. Browning

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
February 5, 1912	Liber 139; p. 1 Arthur P. Browning	J. Applegate & Co. (lease)
April 11, 1912	Liber 141; p. 91 Arthur P. and Stella B. Browning	Josephine A. Coale
January 12, 1917	Book 3007; p. 279 Josephine A. Coale	Elisha P. Cronkhite
May 16, 1923	Liber 3328; p. 411 Elisha P. Cronkhite and Ruth M.	New England Fish Co.
April 29, 1972	Liber 172; p. 398 New England Fish Co.	Seaport Holdings, Inc. lots
June 20, 1973	Book 282; p. 705 Seaport Holdings, Inc.	City of New York lots 1,5,8, (lease)
June 20, 1973	Book 282; p. 814 City of New York	South Street Seaport Museum (lease) lots 1,5,8.
June 27, 1973	Ulser 283; p. 63, 81 City of New York	Chase Manhattan Bank (Nat'l Assoc.) Air Rights transfer/not lotted
August 1, 1974	Liber 320; p. 1045 City of New York	South Street Seaport Museum lots 1,5,8, MOD/L. Reel 2821 814

4. Original plans and construction: The earliest view of 205 Front Street, ca. 1855, providing the right side of its facade, shows what looks like a granite pier storefront and brick facade. The flat-roofed, four-story building had windows made up of twelve small panes. It is very possible that the granite piers and flat roof were added sometime in the 1830s and 1840s when the Greek Revival commercial style was almost universal.
5. Alterations and additions: An 1857 Perris Insurance map shows 205 Front Street as a "second class" brick store with a rear addition covered by two skylights. By 1867, the building was designated "first class" brick store with the rear addition covered by one long horizontal sky light. The reason for this change was that the metal or slate roof has been copied.

A photograph of the building taken in 1883 or 1884, after the Howell gunpowder and fireworks business had moved to 205 Front Street from 206 Front Street, shows that the roof was most probably altered since it is flat.

The Ferris Map of 1884 indicates a hatchway or dumbwaiter on the north wall.

In 1896, plans for an elevator, 2nd to 4th floor only, were included in a violation notice (#5137) about the strength of the floor.

By 1900, 205 Front Street had become an oil factory leased by Pigot, Sayre and Co. According to Alteration Application #496, John Englis and Sons, Builders, planned to alter the building by cutting three 4 by 12's on the third and fourth stories to install a steam kettle for the sum of \$250. In addition they put in new stairs from the first to the second floor.

A 1909 Bromley Map shows that the wall between 205 Front Street and 211 Water Street had been taken down, joining the two buildings.

In 1974 the architecture firm, Beyer, Blinder, Belle, filed an alteration application (#1734) for Block 96W. The firm has executed plans to combine all buildings for restoration purposes by providing a core service facility.

- B. Historical Context: Even before 205 Front Street was built, its site was connected with socially prominent merchants in New York City. While still under water, the lot belonged to John Cannon, a member of a very old and numerous family. The Cannons were related to the Kortrights, Hugeunot merchants; Lawrence Kortright, who subsequently sold the lot in 1763 back to the Cannons, was the second son of Cornelius Kortright who founded that family by marrying Helen Connon in 1730. Lawrence Kortright was one of the original founders of the Chamber of Commerce in 1770. His granddaughter married Alexander Hamilton. Among the Cannons were the prominent merchant brothers in the 18th century, John and LeGrand.

The first occupants of 205 Front Street, then called 200 Front Street, was the shipping merchant firm of Jenkins and Havers. Since Front Street was right on the East River at that time, the firm could be close to its incoming cargo. Scoville refers to the company as a "Large firm". Like most of the buildings in the Seaport area, 205 Front Street has contained a variety of businesses over the years. In 1882, William P. Howell moved his gunpowder business from 206 Front Street to this building.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Built ca. 1800, 205 Front Street is one of the oldest buildings in the South Street Seaport.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 21'-8" x 61'-7" with 12' addition; three-bay facade; rectangular shape; four stories.
2. Foundations: Unknown.
3. Walls: Brick (Flemish bond) facade.
4. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls with timber joists- granite pier and lintel shopfront.
5. Chimneys: Evidence of two flues along south wall at roof.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Second and third bays of first floor are hung with retractable metal garage doors.
 - b. Windows: First floor- Fixed window in first bay. Second-fourth floors- 1/1 double hung sash with granite lintels and sills. The size of windows is graduated-- larger windows at second floor, growing smaller toward fourth floor. West facade- 6/6 sash with steel shutters.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Sloped roof pitched toward rear wall; built-up roll roofing.
 - b. Cornice: Projecting brick cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

First floor- Small office at southeast corner, stairwell along south wall, coolers and freezers in remaining area.

Second floor- Offices and library, stairwell along north wall.

Third floor- Offices and museum storage, stairwell along north wall.

Fourth floor- Open storage area with raised loft in rear. Loft accessible by open stair. Hoist located in northeast corner.

2. Stairways: All stairwells are along north wall except at first floor level which is on south wall. Roof accessible from loft by means of ladder and roof hatch.

3. Flooring:

First floor- Concrete.

Second-fourth floors- Wood.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Walls- Plaster.

Fourth floor ceiling- Exposed for joists.

5. Mechanical equipment: Hoist, operated by means of metal gears is supported by a wood frame.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: 205 Front Street is part of the South Street Seaport Museum, a group of stores, galleries and piers standing in close proximity to high-rise office buildings in lower Manhattan.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

1. A ca. 1855 colored lithographic view of 206 Front Street shows a glimpse of 205 Front Street to the left. From the files of the City of New York, also appearing in Rosebrock, Walking Around South Street, p. 50.
2. A ca. 1883 photograph advertisement of 205 Front Street shows the new Howell gunpowder shop. From the files of the Museum of the City of New York, also appearing in Rosebrock, Walking Around South Street, p. 51.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building and Val Wenzel files, South Street Seaport Museum: Violation notice #5137 (1890); Alteration Application #496 (1900).

New York City Conveyances, Surrogate's Court.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York, 1852-1976, New York Historical Society.

New York City Tax Records, Municipal Archives, 23 Park Row, 1808-1965; Landmarks Preservation Commission; 1802-1807.

Taylor-Roberts Plan of New York, 1797; New York Public Library, also appearing in Rosebrock, Walking Around South Street, p. 9.

Water Lot Grants Map, Val Wenzel file, South Street Seaport Museum.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission: Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S.E. Urban Renewal Area." New York, 1968, p. 7.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Payne, John. New and Complete System of Universal Geography, Vol. IV, pp. 302-4, 309, 314; 1799. (Cited by I.N. Phelps Stokes, Iconography).

Rosebrock, Ellen. Walking Around South Street, New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1974.

Scoville, Joseph A., alias Barrett, W. The Old Merchants of New York. New York: Carleton Publisher, 1862; Vol. IV: pp. 20, 25, 35, 36.

Prepared by: Lori Zabar
HABS Project Historian
Summer 1976

Frederick W. Wiedenmann
HABS Project Supervisor
Summer 1976
(architectural information)

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects- Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.